

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN *K.*

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INFORMATION

July 8, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER *HK*

SUBJECT: Uganda President Amin Continues to Hold Peace Corps Volunteers

A Peace Corps contingent of 112 Volunteers traveling via East African Airways charter for duty in Zaire was detained Saturday in Uganda and continues to be held by President Amin. At 1500 Uganda time today our Embassy in Kampala was informed by an official of East African Airways that while the aircraft reportedly had been granted permission to leave, the Peace Corps Volunteers had not. Instead they were transferred from the airport to the Lake Victoria Hotel. Amin has reportedly taken personal control of the situation and stated he would give word for the release of the Volunteers at an opportune time.

There are no rational explanations for Amin's action. They are in keeping with his well known irrational behavior pattern. He is almost paranoid about mercenaries and his decision apparently was triggered by an intelligence report that there were possibly arms, ammunition, and mercenaries on board the aircraft. He may have considered it odd that they would even transit his country since we have withdrawn our Peace Corps contingent from Uganda. In fact, a transit stop in Uganda reportedly was not in the original charter but was necessitated when the projected stop (Bujumbura airport) ran out of fuel.

Amin reportedly has cabled Kinshasa, Bujumbura, Nairobi, President Gowon of Nigeria in his capacity as President of OAU, and OAU headquarters in Addis Ababa to obtain confirmation that the Volunteers were indeed on their way to Zaire where they had been invited to serve by the Government. He probably will wait until he receives responses to these cables before releasing the Volunteers.

State is making strong representations designed to insure that these responses are prompt and forceful. Thus far President Mobuto of Zaire has responded directly to Amin via cable confirming the legitimacy of the Volunteers. He also plans to send his foreign minister to Kampala tomorrow.

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The Acting Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs has had two conversations with Uganda's Charge, who has telephoned his Government on the matter.

As for the Peace Corps Volunteers, our Embassy in Kampala reports that they are in good spirits and generally good health, if a little weary, and are accompanied at all times by an Embassy official.

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